

**King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from January 12, 2006
Mercer View Community Center
Mercer Island WA**

Commissioners Present: Nancy Hutto, George Irwin, Bob Tidball, Ben Kodama, Grant Davidson, Ewing Stringfellow, Dick Gradwohl, Michael Blakely

Commissioners Absent: Roger Calhoon

Staff: Steve Evans, Judy Herring, Claire Dyckman, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs; Julia Larson, King County Economic Strategies, Executive's Office.

Guest Agency Staff: Josh Monahan, King Conservation District (KCD); Brad Gaolach, Washington State University Extension (WSU) KC.

Guests: Marilyn Cope, staff, King County Council; Anne Mack, P.L.A.N.; Will Knedlik, IMGA; Rachel Petrich, interested citizen; Greg Gachowsky, interested citizen.

Nancy Hutto called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes: The Commission approved and corrected the December meeting notes.

Commission Roundabout:

George Irwin: updated the Commission on the status of the King County Fairgrounds; was elected to the Pierce/King Farm Bureau Board; noted that China, Japan and Viet Nam are now open to beef markets, a boost for the industry. Nancy Hutto: suggested a review of Capitol Press report on the Agricultural Business Center to identify anything relevant to us; and asked what we could learn from Snohomish County's "Focus on Farming" (Steve Evans suggested we ask them to come and talk with us). Grant Davidson: will have five markets this year, including two new ones, each farmer-owned, one in Juanita, the other at Crossroads. Ewing Stringfellow: the tree farm season is here. Bob Tidball: with authority, "water is rising in the (Green) Valley". Michelle Blakely: (Snoqualmie) "I feel like I can offer swimming lessons to people now, since that is what I have to do to get to my vehicle..."

Chair Report: Nancy Hutto would like a flow chart that portrays what the Commission is working on, and has asked staff to provide such a tracking system. Bob Tidball would like it to be retroactive.

Staff Report: Steve Evans reported that the King County Council provided a significant increase in the Puget Sound Fresh budget over that of '05. The program will not do anything dramatically different, just more of it: low-cost ads on cable TV and the back ends of busses; distributing the Community Subscription Agriculture guides; and increasing support to farmer's markets. Judy Herring reported that the County had been involved in the development of the new Farmland Preservation Program of the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, and said she would forward a draft to Commissioners.

Agency Reports:

King Conservation District (KCD) Josh Monaghan reported on several items:

- KCD Livestock Classes: The next series begins at Preston on February 16th.
- "The Good the Bad and the Bugly": an evening presentation in Preston on February 24th.
- Behavioral Management Workshop: Dr. Fred Provenza at Utah State University will give a workshop on behavioral management class and livestock diet May 9th to 11th.
- Bare Root Sale: KCD will take orders through February.
- New Farm Planner: Ann Marie Magnochi of Carnation has been hired by the KCD as a farm planner.

Washington State University (WSU) Extension Brad Gaolach invited the Commission to provide advisement and evaluation of the local WSU Extension program, noting that they would appreciate such a sounding board and that it is appropriate since they will working even more closely with the Water and Land Division of DNRP.

Presentation on King County WSU Extension:

Brad Gaolach provided an overview of the programs, resources, and needs of King County WSU Extension. This was done with the purpose of helping Commission members to report back to the WLRD Director on issues of potential gaps and overlaps among KCD, WSU Extension, and the County Agriculture Program. Brad gave an in depth presentation, available from his office. His overview included:

- An overview of the wide variety of Extension's educational and technical assistance services, whether classes or one-on-one assistance; and of its ability to support agricultural production and practices through its direct link to the research and expertise of WSU and the entire system of land-grant institutions.
- Extension's collaboration with a variety of agencies and community groups to deliver community program that support agriculture in King county, such as Food Sense, the Food Policy Council, Livestock Advisors, Harvest Celebration, and the Small Farm Expo. Budget cuts threaten the continuation of the latter three programs, because WSU will not be able to continue in its facilitation role.
- In Brad's view: Extension helps agriculture "add value"; KCD addresses land management; the County's role is regulatory and farmbudsman services.

Presentation on Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program (ADAP):

Elizabeth Weldin reviewed the history and goals of the ADAP program. The program is needed to assist landowners in addressing drainage and flooding problems related to the 1,000 miles of agriculture "ditches" throughout the County, including assistance with state and federal permits; cost share of some required activities; and planting along ditches as mitigation for the impacts of dredging. She summarized the number of projects conducted annually, the number of landowners requesting future assistance, and the status of the research being conducted by Washington State University and the University of Washington. Her presentation included pictures of some of the practices and projects.

Commissioner used this opportunity to clarify issues of pesticide use; permit thresholds; mechanized vs. hand-labor.

Public Comment:

Permits for Agricultural Buildings: Josh Monaghan reported that the KCD was working with several farmers who need permits for old or new agricultural buildings such as loafing sheds. Although the County has made several moves to cap agricultural permit costs, it appears this may still be an outstanding issue. One dairyman received an estimate of \$10,000 to permit his loafing shed. Josh suggested we still need to look at fast tracking building permits designated as agricultural, and perhaps lower costs by not holding certain types of buildings to commercial development standards. Bob Tidball commented that extensive engineering is conducted for pole buildings. He does not understand why DDES needs to requalify them. "If Boeing had to requalify every part it used, a plane would not be built."

Commission Business:

Old Business: Ewing Stringfellow reported on the status of his negotiations with the County to obtain nearby land rather than monetary compensation, for a County condemnation action of some of his farm acreage. He appreciated that Nancy Hutto, Chair of the Commission, had conducted a site visit on his property. He thanked the Commission for its timely letter urging the County to work with him on a creative swap. The Assistant Director of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks had met with him, and appeared responsive. Ewing was hopeful, though not certain, of the outcome.

Motion: Dick Gradwold moved, and Bob Tidball seconded, that a follow-up letter be written to the Executive and Council. Discussion ensued. Bob Tidball noted that this is an instance where the county is at cross-purposes with itself. Furthermore, Park's land is being swapped in exchange for agricultural land with the Muller property. If there are constraints with federal funding sources on the Parks parcel, perhaps Ewing could work out a 50 year lease with Parks. Michael noted that Washington State Department of Transportation has purchased agricultural lands as mitigation for the round-about at 124th on the road between Carnation and Duvall, and there have been problems for adjacent lands. It is crucial to be proactive with County and State roads departments. Dick noted that there are some parallels with other situations here, and follow up letters are often useful. Motion passed.

New Business**North Fork Ranches Follow-Up:**

Nancy Hutto noted how important it had been for her to visit Ewing's property, see what he had done to cultivate a poor area, observe the scotch broom on the Park's sites and imagine what he would do to improve those sites - all providing an on-the-ground understanding of the issue. She proposed that Commissioners - at least one Commissioner - should go out and look at land when a constituent comes with a problem.

Commission Priorities for 06:

Julia Larson began this topic by discussing the agricultural strategies in the Rural Economic Strategies Report, indicating how closely they dovetail with the priorities identified by the Commission at its December work session. She thanked the Commissioners for their contributions to the report. She wants to listen to the Commission's priorities for her work, and

to ask them to help her understand the barriers. She will be reporting to Council in a few months.

Commission discussion included the following comments, primarily for the report, but also for their broader work priorities:

- Barriers would be noted if the County put out a solicitation for case histories from constituents.
- If the Commission has a committee for arbitration, issues would also be identified.
- If the Commission were to be the magnet for problems, would it be overwhelmed?
- We would have to set priorities on what to address.
- Staff can compile a list of barriers from their knowledge of issues to date, and a committee could review that list.
- The problem is the application of existing rules to real circumstances - for example applying "home industry" rules to agriculture would be like applying agricultural rules to other industries - screwball regulations.
- Housing for workers is a top priority that is not included in the report.
- Along with arbitration is the idea of having commissioners or an agricultural representative at the table in planning and project decisions. How does Snohomish do it? Do they have a rotating schedule?
- Does the County need a farmer's auction? If so, we need adequate auction facilities.
- The Ag Commission will be able to have a website, but probably not a newsletter. Therefore: use existing newsletters, add articles and information.
- Have a site for who to go to for what.
- Agriculture faces negative impacts related to the expansion of suburban cities. There are no "buffers" between agriculture and growth. Can this be addressed? Give the planning departments of various cities our numbers, or ask them to contact Julia and Ag staff.

The Commission was concerned about what resources Julia Larson had to attack these issues. She said she had to work with others, and then "take things up the ladder."

It was decided that the meeting of the Program Subcommittee on Monday, January 30 - would be used as a subcommittee Meeting of the Whole to wrap up a final proposal for the '06 work priorities for ratification at the February Commission Meeting.

Nancy Hutto adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM.